

SIX STRATEGIES TO CREATE A GROWTH MINDSET SCHOOL



Psychologist Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset theory describes the belief that intelligence can be developed through perseverance and effort. In contrast, a fixed mindset focuses on the belief that intelligence or ability is set and cannot be changed.

Dweck claims whichever mindset children have has huge implications on how they approach learning, how they perceive, overcome or avoid challenges and ultimately, how they achieve in education.

1. USE THE LANGUAGE OF SUCCESS

YET



Words have power. One word can build a child up or tear them down. Small tweaks to how we communicate with children can make all the difference.

Carol Dweck swears by the power of 'YET'. When a child hasn't quite got it right rather than them feeling defeated or a failure, add the word 'yet'.

I can't do maths...**YET**.
I can't spell...**YET**.
I can't read this word...**YET**.

One small word, three little letters, and yet a word full of power. 'Yet' implies a forward motion, space for growth, and an unwavering expectation that you believe they can do it.

2. EFFECTIVE PRAISE AND FEEDBACK

According to Dweck praise for effort rather than achievement is one of the most effective methods of promoting a growth mindset in children.

This doesn't mean lots of empty praise, as this can be harmful to pupils' learning.

To help we can break it down into three different types of praise:

1. Strategy or Process based praise. For example, praise for how they have set about solving a problem or task.

2. Effort based praise. For example, "That is a great score you must have tried really hard" as opposed to "That's a great score. You must be good at this."

3. Target based praise. For example, "Now you could have a go at..."

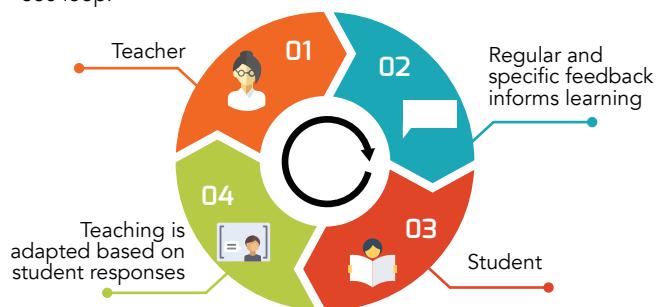
We can go one step further by phrasing praise as feedback, so we can keep up the momentum. For example:

- ▶ What can you tackle next? **(Effort based)**
- ▶ How can this strategy help you? **(Process based)**
- ▶ How can you build on this? **(Target based)**

Good feedback is:

- ▶ Specific
- ▶ Hard on the content
- ▶ Supportive of the person

For feedback to be truly effective there has to be a continual 360 loop.



Most importantly, praise and feedback should always support the messages we value.

3. DEFINE WHAT 'EFFORT' LOOKS LIKE AT YOUR SCHOOL?



There has been little exploration into teachers' and students' perceptions of effort, which is an interesting omission given the current interest in focusing on effort rather than inability as a cause of poor performance.

'Effort' has been described variously, from the rather vague notion of 'working hard,' to the more specific focus of quantity of study hours. Dweck classes effort as persisting in the face of an intellectual challenge.

Intriguingly, a study into children's perceptions of ability, effort and conduct found they often confused the three. Children primarily used outcomes such as grades for assessing ability.

Good conduct was defined by being quiet, obeying and not fighting, while effort was defined primarily by behaviours such as completing a task quickly and 'always working.' Interestingly, effort was also judged as 'staying out of trouble' or ability-related, such as grades or task performance, rather than cognitive aspects of mental exertion.

With this in mind, what does effort look like to you and your students? Create clear expectations, display them proudly and live by them.

4. EXPECTATIONS AND CHALLENGE

All the way back in 1968, two researchers conducted a fascinating study. A teacher was told the children in her classroom were classified as 'high potential' after completing a test. She then taught as if all the students were high achievers and results rocketed but there was no test, no classification and no 'high potential,' just regular children thriving under their teacher's high expectations of them.

Teaching to the top while providing support or scaffolding for students at their different stages is vital. There are lots of little things we can do to help create a culture of high expectations and challenge in the classroom.



Here are a few ideas:

- Personal Challenge Diaries
- Growth Journal
- Challenge unhelpful thoughts (back to language of success!)
- Set agreed goals and review periods
- Feedback Fridays
- Reflect – what skills are required?
- Mindset Monday
- Progress charts
- Weekly challenges!

5. LEARN TO LEARN STRATEGIES



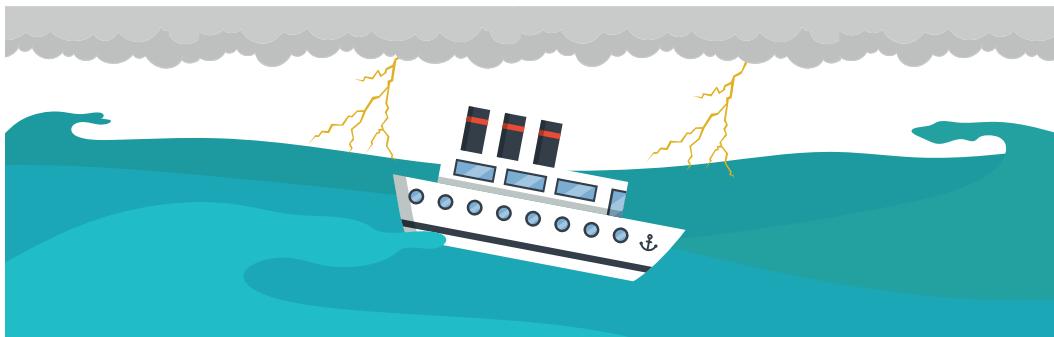
In a study Dweck had two groups of pupils, one only received lessons about Growth Mindset while the other group had a programme on both Mindset and study skills. The group who received the Mindset and study skills programme progressed further because they were explicitly taught how the brain learns, and equipped with strategies to support their learning.

For example,
this includes techniques surrounding:

- Time Management
- Memory Techniques
- How to understand and condense text or topics
- Mind Maps
- Reading Strategies
- Note-Taking
- Retrieval, interleaved and spaced practice
- Exam Techniques

... to name but a few!

6. PATIENCE, PERSEVERANCE AND CONSISTENCY



Changing many years worth of culture and belief is not going to happen overnight, or after one assembly. It will take time, things will ebb and flow, it won't be easy. Have patience, persevere and remain consistent. Steady the ship when the storm blows and remember what is important to you – that every child, no matter their social-economic background, can achieve.

When you think, "this isn't working," remember YET!



For more information about our motivational student, parent and staff workshops on:

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